

# CRJW

CENTER FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WORKS

Uniting Children, Families and Communities Separated by Crime and the Criminal Justice System





## Dear CRJW Friends,

**N**ot often does a 20-year-old nonprofit organization have the opportunity to create new tools to accomplish its mission. But that is precisely what the Center For Restorative Justice Works (CRJW) has been doing during the Covid-19 pandemic. Many of you know the extreme challenges that incarcerated people, their children and families face: high rates of Covid transmission in prisons; cancellation of in-person visits for more than a year; difficulty in communicating with incarcerated loved ones; not knowing about the health and safety of loved ones during the worst of the pandemic; and in some very tragic cases, not being able to say goodbye. In our Annual Report, you will read real stories which highlight the importance of the work CRJW does to keep families connected...always.

Our mission is simple: keeping children and families connected and helping them to continue building family relationships when a parent is incarcerated. To realize this mission during the pandemic, CRJW is working with families and California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) institutions to reimagine ways by which families can maintain constant connection. These efforts have led to pioneering programs including Stay Connected Projects, Video Messaging, and our first ever Get On The Bus Hub which CRJW will launch in the coming months. These new programs showcase our firm commitment to pursuing CRJW's mission wherever it leads so that we are able to provide critical family services to families across California.

In this year's annual report, we share stories of families staying connected during the pandemic, of CRJW's inspiring success in the LA2050 Grants Challenge, and of the importance of preparing for Get On The Bus when in-person visits resume. The foundation for CRJW's continuing success is community! We are grateful to have a community of caring and compassionate supporters who offer their time, energy, passion, and donations to further our mission and support our families. We are a grass-roots organization, powered by people like you. Fulfillment of CRJW's mission is only possible because of the incredible support we receive from local communities, parishes, volunteers, foundations, and YOU. Thank you all.

John E. Kalin  
Chair of the Board of Directors, CRJW

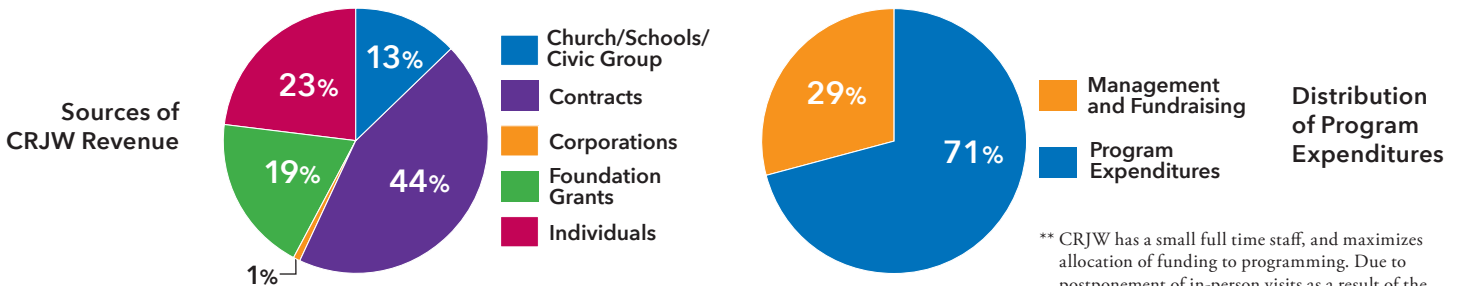
Liz Rios  
Executive Director, CRJW

# Financial Stewardship



The Center for Restorative Justice Works raises funds to support programs through a grassroots network of generous donors. Each donation adds a compassionate voice to our work to keep families together when a parent is in prison. We are grateful to each contributor and to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation for joining us in this mission. We are also proud that CRJW's commitment to transparency and responsible financial stewardship has been recognized with a **Guidestar Platinum Seal of Transparency**.

During the 2020/2021 Fiscal Year, CRJW raised **\$562,379**. The sources and use of funds are detailed below.



\*The figures above are unaudited as of the printing of this report. CRJW is independently reviewed by Banks Accountancy and the review is available by February of each year.

\*\* CRJW has a small full time staff, and maximizes allocation of funding to programming. Due to postponement of in-person visits as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic this year, some program funds are being rolled over to next year. The graph on the right (Distribution of Program Expenditures) does not reflect program funds earmarked for allocation next year.

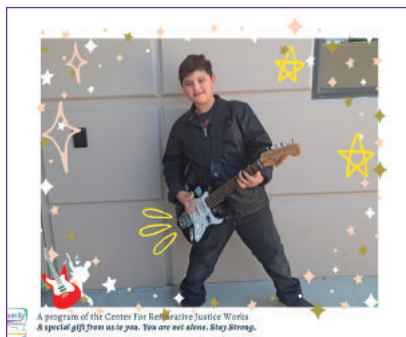
## INSTITUTIONS SERVED

- Avenal State Prison
- California Correctional Center
- California Correctional Institution
- California Institution for Men
- California Institution for Women
- California Men's Colony
- California State Prison, Corcoran
- California State Prison, Los Angeles County
- California State Prison, Sacramento
- California State Prison, Solano
- Substance Abuse Treatment Facility and State Prison, Corcoran
- Calipatria State Prison
- California State Prison, Centinela
- Central California Women's Facility
- Chuckawalla Valley State Prison
- Correctional Training Facility
- Folsom State Prison
- Folsom Women's Facility
- High Desert State Prison
- Ironwood State Prison
- Kern Valley State Prison
- Mule Creek State Prison
- Pelican Bay State Prison
- Pleasant Valley State Prison
- Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility
- Salinas Valley State Prison
- San Quentin State Prison
- Valley State Prison
- Wasco State Prison

## Stay Connected Projects

During the pandemic, CRJW has worked with families, volunteers, CDCR, and partnering institutions to find new ways to keep families connected during lockdowns and cancelled family visits. From letter writing to recorded video messages, CRJW is finding ways to provide family reunification services even during a global pandemic.

### Josee Avalos talks about the recent Halloween and Fall Holiday Project



*Postcards keep CRJW families connected during the holidays.*

For the Halloween/Fall Project, Family Express wanted to help children and loved ones to show some holiday spirit to their incarcerated loved ones. Families were excited to send messages of hope and happiness to their incarcerated loved ones. This was a spontaneous holiday project, but families were appreciative to be able to share Halloween with their loved ones.

While Halloween can be a holiday of ghosts and goblins, this year we turned it into an opportunity to connect with incarcerated loved ones and to send words of love. The messages that came in were really touching. I know it meant a lot to the incarcerated mothers, fathers, and loved ones who received them.

— Josee Avalos, Family Express Program Associate

# Volunteers & Interns

We could not provide family reunification services to families across California without an incredible community of selfless volunteers who donate their time, energy, and compassion to our mission.

## Meet the volunteers and interns who make our work possible

I have had the utmost pleasure volunteering for the Get On The Bus program for over a year. Volunteering at GOTB has been particularly meaningful to me. As a child, I experienced the anguish that many children face when their parents become incarcerated. The services that GOTB provides for families to help children reunite with their incarcerated loved ones are remarkable. It warms my heart when I hear families say they are beyond grateful that we are still thinking



about them and continue to support them through these difficult and uncertain times. Working with GOTB has provided me with a sense of gratification in knowing that I have made an impact in the lives of these families. The CRJW staff are amazing people who are always searching for innovative ways to connect families to their incarcerated loved ones, and they work

tirelessly to gather much needed resources for families. Thank you to CRJW for allowing me to be a part of this amazing organization.

– Lisa Rios, GOTB Volunteer

Being an intern at CRJW during the pandemic has been a unique and eye-opening experience. Not only have I been able to work with a team that demonstrates sincerity to fulfill its mission despite all odds, but I have also been able to communicate with families and learn about some of their past and ongoing struggles. Undeterred by hardships, these families exude hope and positivity for a better future, and continuously express gratitude for CRJW reducing some of the burdens they feel on their shoulders. Although COVID precautions have temporarily put a pause on bus trips, the CRJW team is always finding ways to reunite families with their loved ones. We created Stay Connected Kits with letter-writing materials for families to maintain communication with their loved ones; we also delivered postcards that displayed family pictures and warm messages to bring joy and season greetings. A lot of work and dedication is put into these projects. It's been an honor to work with CRJW and I truly appreciate everything I have been taught, because it's something that has become a part of me and that I will carry for the rest of my life.



– Libny Martinez, CRJW Intern

## Thank you to all of our volunteers, interns and partnering institutions

### Schools & Partners Providing Interns/Volunteers

- California State University, Fullerton
  - Division of Politics, Administration & Justice
  - Alpha Phi Sigma
- California State University, Long Beach
  - College of Liberal Arts, Department of Sociology
  - School of Art
  - School of Criminology, Criminal Justice, and Emergency Management
- California State University, Los Angeles
  - School of Criminal Justice and Criminalistics
- California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo
  - Social Sciences Department
- University of California, Irvine
  - School of Social Ecology

### Partnerships

- California State University, Los Angeles
  - California Dream Act Service Incentive Grant Program (DSIG)
- America's Job Center of California
  - East Los Angeles West San Gabriel Valley
  - Archdiocesan Youth Employment of Los Angeles

# Family Express

Family Express, supported by CDCR, provides free transportation and family reunification services to California families on a weekly basis. By offering safe and reliable transportation to visit a loved one in prison, Family Express offers the opportunity to restore and build those precious family relationships that mean so much to us all. Due to limited visiting and frequent shutdowns during the pandemic, Family Express has been dedicated to finding innovative ways to keep families connected with their loved ones on the inside.

*Darlene visits her mom in Central California Women’s Facility (CCWF) through Family Express. Her father is also incarcerated at the Pelican Bay State Prison (PBSP).*



Family express has helped me and my family in ways that are inexplicable. Their trips are amazing, and it makes us feel joyful and happy. It has opened opportunities for us as well. Instead of only going once a month to visit, I can go twice. Family express brings me and my family joy because it helps us see each other after being separated for a long time.

Family Express has made us feel great and safe. They always make sure we are comfortable and help us with whatever we need. They frequently offer new ways that we can better reach out to our loved ones. But most importantly, they treat us like family. – Darlene, 14

# Get On The Bus

Get On The Bus (GOTB), our flagship transitional program, provides free transportation during Mother’s Day and Father’s Day for children to visit a parent at California state prisons.

*Marcelina shares her family’s experience with Get On The Bus*

Our family like so many others has unfortunately experienced missing a loved one due to incarceration. Our family experienced this for so many years before we heard of Get On The Bus.

It had been roughly two years since our family last saw our loved one, and it was especially hard on the kids. Prior to COVID, GOTB was able to collaborate with the state prison our loved one was in and put together a weekend trip for us to visit. They not only set up a special visit and provided a charter bus for transportation, but they also provided food and a hotel room for us to stay in. And we also can’t forget about the little goody bags GOTB put together with a special hand-written letter from our loved one. Without the help from Get On The Bus, I’m not sure when we would have been able to plan a trip. Holidays and birthdays always seem to be the hardest, especially for the kids.

My kids love their father so much, and although what the program offers cannot take the place of actually having their daddy home with them, it definitely helps boost their level of happiness knowing that there is a special program that cares,



and a daddy who is trying to stay connected even though he is so far away. Get On The Bus and all their staff make it possible for my family to continue to hold onto hope in this very unfortunate situation.

– Marcelina Izquierdo, GOTB Participant



# Camp Suzanne

Camp Suzanne provides a rare opportunity for children to spend quality time with their mothers in prison. The week-long camp program, a combination of art and family support, offers a platform to nurture the critical relationship of mother and child.

During this week-long summer program, children spend mornings and afternoons with their mothers on prison grounds, engaging in fun activities like dancing, creating art, games, and having a movie night with mom.

## *Michael Pallares, Warden of the Central California Women's Facility (CCWF), describes how Camp Suzanne has impacted incarcerated mothers and staff at CCWF*

Camp Suzanne is a program that has helped on many different levels at CCWF. One of the important impacts of the program is that it lets incarcerated women at CCWF and prison staff see each other as human beings. CCWF staff are able to see incarcerated individuals as loving mothers with their children; and CCWF mothers are able to see the staff interact with their children. Before Camp Suzanne, women incarcerated at CCWF only saw the staff as officers and authorities at the institution, but Camp Suzanne humanizes the officers and lets inmates see them in a different light. The program breaks down barriers between inmates and staff at the institution, and it also facilitates the opening of communication channels.

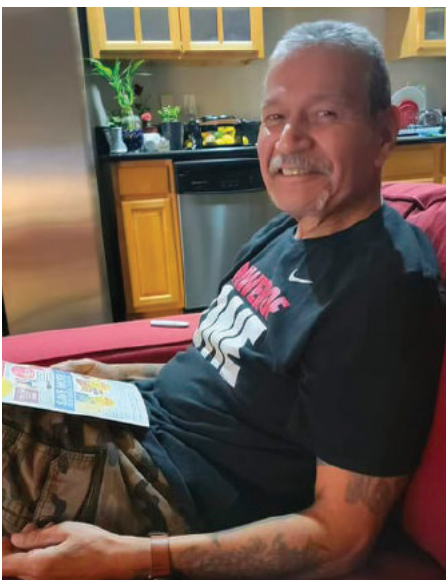
For the mothers and their children, this is a very impactful program. California institutions generally do not allow incarcerated individuals to hold their children during a visit. At Camp Suzanne, children can cuddle with their mothers while they watch a movie, and reach out and embrace each other in ways that normally would not be possible. I've seen the positive impact this makes on families. We look forward to partnering with the Camp Suzanne program again after the pandemic.

– Michael Pallares, Warden of the Central California Women's Facility (CCWF)



Transition4Success provides employment and job training for formerly incarcerated individuals. This program supports positive post-prison outcomes for the formerly incarcerated by helping them adjust back into society with a sense of self-worth and dignity.

## *Jimmy shares his Transition4Success story*



I owe my success and accomplishments to Amalia Molina and Lupe Rivera, former Executive Directors of the Transition4Success Program. Both of these dear, caring ladies gave me the opportunity I needed to change my life. Four years after my release from prison I am working as a Registered Alcohol Drug Technician (RADT). Next year I will take the certification exam to become a licensed Addiction Counselor. I have also been discharged early from parole. Amalia, Lupe, and the Transition-4Success Program will forever hold a special place in my heart.

– Jimmy G. Mejia, Transition4Success Participant





CrossOver, also called Women of Wisdom (WOW), provides monthly support services at the California Institution for Women in Chino. This volunteer-driven program invites community members to cross into the world of prisons and to foster transformed understanding between the outside community and those experiencing incarceration. CrossOver restores community relationships and creates awareness about the real impacts of the criminal justice system.

*Dorinda CrossOver/WOW Volunteer, shares her experience of the program*

CrossOver is women supporting women, which is desperately needed in the criminal justice system. It is women satisfying a hunger for a shared story, a shared wisdom, and a shared voice. It is women realizing they are not alone. It is women finding joy in each other's presence even in the darkest of places. It is women holding one another's hearts tenderly and helping each other to heal. It is women embracing their brokenness so the light can shine through. It is women loving each other into wholeness. It is love.

*– Dorinda Upham, CrossOver/WOW Volunteer,  
CRJW Board Member*



*Volunteers play an important role in the success of CRJW's Stay Connected Projects.*

# WINNING THE LA2050 GRANTS CHALLENGE

Get On The Bus was honored to be awarded the 2nd place prize in this year's LA2050 Grants Challenge! LA2050 offers grants to organizations with innovative ideas for how to make LA the best city to live in during the pandemic and beyond. Our LA2050 GOTB vision is to improve family connections for children with incarcerated parents through monthly video visits and expanded access to in-person visits after the pandemic. Video visits are a gamechanger for children who sometimes go months and years without being able to say "I love you" to incarcerated mothers and fathers.

Get On The Bus will use grant money to establish the first Get On The Bus Hub in Los Angeles. GOTB Hubs are safe

spaces with Internet connectivity that help families register and participate in regular video visits with their incarcerated loved ones. But GOTB Hubs aren't just about providing devices and Wifi – they are about bringing together a community of volunteers, local organizations, and people to support one of LA County's most vulnerable populations. Hubs also provide food, fun activities, homework help and access to a support network of caring volunteers and professional staff.

Thank you to LA2050 and to all of our supporters for this opportunity to expand our mission serving children and families impacted by parental incarceration.

# LA2050

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# Our Donors

*Space constraints limit us to only listing donations received by September 30, 2021. We are very grateful for every donation that we receive; please forgive any omissions.*

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*A big thank you to Sister Teresa Lynch for the beautiful photos that appear in this report.*



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***Thank You!***

A special thanks to our many in-kind donors. Thank you to Walkenhorst's of Napa, CA for donating Get On The Bus t-shirts for our families and volunteers, and to Scott Thorshov for our Get On The Bus database. Other amazing partners include PRISM Restorative Justice and St. Matthew Episcopal Church for hosting the annual picnic; St. Bernadette Catholic Church for hosting the Christmas Party; Adopt-A-Family, Holy Family Catholic Church, Glendale, St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church for providing Christmas gifts to CRJW families; See The Lord for providing CRJW families free vision screening and glasses; and Quan Huynh for donating books. Thank you to all the parishes, dioceses, schools, and civic groups that come together each year to make these events happen for so many children and families. We could not do this work without you.

# CRJW

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